

284 Ruby

African American girls have paved the way toward a more equitable education system in the U.S. Their mothers and fathers encouraged these little warriors to stride forth, chins up and heads held high. These families risked their lives to claim equal opportunity for education and fight the forces of injustice, poverty, and prejudice.

Though decades have passed since the 14th and 15th Amendments, and *Brown v. Board of Education* established constitutional protections for educational access, most U.S. schools remain segregated, and the larger goal of equity is still elusive. Our current political climate continues to undermine access to education, voting, civic participation, and healthcare.

This figure stands in for all the famous and forgotten little girls who bravely went to new schools in the face of hostility, bullying, mobs, and death threats. She carries a school bag and holds a small coffin with a Black baby doll, reminiscent of the coffin carried by members of the white mob protesting Ruby's first day of integrated school in 1960. In my imagination, little Ruby has the innocence to cuddle and protect that baby doll forever.